

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-02 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 CAB-02 DODE-00 DOTE-00 FAA-00 L-03

FMC-01 CG-00 DLOS-09 OES-07 PM-05 H-01 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

/082 W

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O R 252312Z JAN 78 ZFF4

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5494

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0371

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: GENERAL STRIKE CALLED

BEGIN SUMMARY: COALITION OF MAJOR PRIVATE SECTOR GROUPS HAS CALLED FOR A GENERAL STRIKE OF INDEFINITE DURATION. STRIKE WHICH BEGAN LAST MONDAY HAS PICKED UP STEAM AND IS NEARLY COMPLETE FOR MAJOR, LOCAL PRIVATE CONCERNS IN MANAGUA TODAY AND INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE THAT STRIKE HAS SPREAD TO OTHER TOWNS OF NICARAGUA. NO REAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN PRO- AND ANTI-SOMOZA FORCES HAS YET OCCURRED, BUT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE GUARDIA NACIONAL HAS INDICATED CLEARLY THAT IT CONTINUES TO SIDE WITH THE SOMOZAS. OPPOSITION ELEMENTS ARE MANIFESTING AN NOT-HERETOFORE-SEEN UNITY AIMED AT ULTIMATELY BRINGING SOMOZA DOWN. WHILE IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER STRIKE SUCCEEDS IN BUDGING SOMOZA, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE STRIKE HAS PROVED TO BE A RALLYING POINT WHICH HAS CHANGED NICARAGUA'S POLITICAL SCENE, PERHAPS INDELIBLY. END SUMMARY.

1. CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND CONSTRUCTION, INDE, AND OTHER  
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SMALLER PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS HELD MARATHON SESSION YESTERDAY (JAN. 24) AND HAMMERED OUT AN AGREEMENT TO CALL FOR A GENERAL STRIKE /WORK STOPPAGE OF "INDEFINITE" DURATION.

2. SURVEY OF BUSINESSES IN MANAGUA THIS MORNING (JAN. 25) AND EARLY AFTERNOON INDICATE CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS OF STRIKE. ALMOST ALL SIGNIFICANT PRIVATE BUSINESSES ARE CLOSED EXCEPT FOR SOMOZA-CONNECTED

FIRMS, GON-SPONSORED ENTITIES, SOME FOREIGN-OWNED ENTERPRISES, AND, OF COURSE, GON OFFICES. MOST PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE, INCLUDING MANY DOCTORS, ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE JOINED THE STRIKE.

3. WE HAVE HAD REPORTS THAT STRIKE HAS EXTENDED TO SOME PROVINCIAL TOWNS, SUCH AS DIRIAMBÁ AND JINOTEPE SOUTH OF MANAGUA, AND CONTINUES IN LEON, NICARAGUA'S SECOND LARGEST CITY. MAIN PORT OF CORINTO, WHICH RUN BY GON, REPORTEDLY CONTINUES TO OPERATE. MANAGUA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, LAS MERCEDES, IS TECHNICALLY OPEN, I.E., AIRLINES CONTINUE TO LAND AND TAKE OFF, BUT NO TICKETING OR RESERVATION SERVICE REPORTEDLY POSSIBLE FOR PAN AM AND OTHER FOREIGN FOREIGN AIRLINES PASSENGERS. SOMOZA'S LA NICA AIRLINE IS PRESUMABLY OPERATING FAIRLY NORMALLY.

4. GON APPEARS UNCERTAIN HOW BEST TO COPE WITH THE WIDESPREAD STRIKE WHICH HAS NO COUNTERPARTS IN RECENT OR EVEN DIM MEMORY IN NICARAGUA. STRIKE HAS THUS FAR BEEN MUCH MORE SUCCESSFUL AND POPULAR THAN ITS PLANNERS HAD DREAMED. (N.B. MANY LOCAL EMPLOYEES OF THIS EMBASSY WISHED TO JOIN STRIKERS BUT WERE PERSUADED THAT EMBASSY IS APOLITICAL AND ANYWAY MUST BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO FUNCTION.)

5. GENERAL JOSE R. SOMOZA, NO. 2 MAN IN NATIONAL GUARD (GN) AND HALF-BROTHER OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA TOLD DATT THAT GN WOULD NOT PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR FIRMS WHICH PARTICIPATED IN STRIKE BUT WOULD DO FOR THOSE WHICH REMAINED OPEN. (COMMENT: THIS CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF THE POLITICIZATION OF THE GUARDIA IS A POTENTIALLY OMINOUS CONFIDENTIAL

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FACTOR SHOULD THE THUS-FAR NONVIOLENT UPRISING OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AGAINST THE SOMOZA REGIME TAKE A VIOLENT TURN.)

6. COMMENT: IT IS STILL POSSIBLE THAT STRIKE WILL BEGIN TO BREAK DOWN OVER NEXT SEVERAL DAYS WITHOUT ACHIEVING ANY SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS FROM SOMOZA BUT IT HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED THAT SOMOZA IS NO LONGER IN AS COMPLETE CONTROL OF EVENTS IN NICARAGUA AS HE WAS SIX OR SEVEN MONTHS AGO, SAY. IT MAY ALSO PROVE TO HAVE PRODUCED A MAJOR CHANGE IN NICARAGUA'S POLITICAL LIFE IN THAT IT HAS BROUGHT ABOUT A UNITY OF DISPARATE, MOSTLY CONSERVATIVE, FORCES THAT HS NEVER BEEN SEEN IN NICARAGUA THIS CENTURY. AND MOST OF THESE FORCES ARE UNITED IN A DEMAND FOR SOMOZA'S RESIGNATION AND SEEM TO THINK THEY NOW SMELL BLOOD.  
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## Message Attributes

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